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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000546

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS PUT OFF DECISION ON SMER -
AGAIN

Classified By: DCM Lawrence R. Silverman for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) The Party of European Socialists (PES) voted October 4 to put off until spring a decision on whether to grant Prime Minister Robert Fico's party Smer-Socialna Demokracia (Smer) full membership in its European parliamentary grouping. The decision was expected, since PES Chairman Paul Nyrup Rasmussen said on October 2 that "Smer needs more time to expel extremists from the government." While Rasmussen did not refer to coalition partner Jan Slota or his Slovak National Party (SNS) by name, PES has previously stated that Smer's coalition with SNS violated the organization's prohibition on supporting or cooperating with parties that promote racism, extremism or nationalism. During the week before the PES meeting, Slota actively reinforced this image with his statements about the Hungarian governing coalition and domestic Hungarian party (SMK) leader Pal Csaky. Fico himself burned bridges by reacting strongly to Rasmussen's October 2 comment, saying his government had done nothing that could lead to charges of extremism, and that any such characterization of an EU member state without proof was a serious accusation.

¶2. (C) While PES was meeting on October 4 to decide Smer's fate, Smer International Secretary Katarina Nedvedalova was meeting with Poloff. The number of calls and text messages she received during the meeting seemed to confirm that multiple friendly sources were sending her information from inside the PES session, especially from the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD, which supports Smer's membership, based on Fico's close ties to CSSD leader Paroubek.) Immediately after the meeting, Nedvedalova was called by someone she identified as Rasmussen's assistant, who asked her to have Fico call Rasmussen so that he could explain the decision to the Prime Minister in person in advance of a planned press conference. Nedvedalova reached Fico immediately and explained to him that PES had put off a decision on Smer's membership until their spring meeting. She further told Fico that Smer had considerable support within the PES meeting and that only the Hungarian delegation was in favor of expelling Smer. All other national delegations expressed support for Smer, she said, but only the Czech delegation and some French and Spanish delegates were willing to consider restoring Smer's membership at this time. Nedvedalova told Fico that Slota's recent comments about Csaky and the Hungarians were the only reason PES had decided to continue the suspension until spring. After hanging up with Fico, Nedvedalova explained to Poloff that PES would find a new form of cooperation that would enable Smer representatives to take part in its parliamentary meetings almost as if they were members until formal membership could be reinstated. (Comment: Nedvedalova's comments to both Fico and Poloff sounded far too rosy to be believed at face value, especially since Slota is widely disdained by the European left and he obviously will not tone down his rhetoric. Smer does have friends within PES, however, especially among its Czech counterparts, and PES will likely find a way to work with Smer even if they do not

re-admit them in the spring. End Comment.)

VALLEE